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By- Bradley, R. C.

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An investigative study sought to identify those factors characteristic of an ideal interpersonal relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers and to determine if the two groups agree as to the determinants of that relationship. A 110-statement measuring instrument was developed by means of a series of Q technique ratings by 60 college coordinators of student teachers. To summerize from the Q Sort data, an ideal cooperating teacher is one who is sincere in his efforts to supply intra- and extra-classroom experiences of a professional type for a student teacher; does demonstration teaching before the student teacher instructs the class on his own; strives to improve the working relationship of the student teacher with his class; "gives and takes" in the personal, private conference in which the student teacher is given opportunities to discuss any actions during the teaching day and to develop his own functional philosophy of education on a constructive, positive basis. When ratings were intercorrelated and correlation matrices were factor analyzed, it was found that the 20 classroom teachers (classified by their directors as outstanding cooperating teachers) and the 20 senior student teachers (selected randomly from those at North Texas State University) strongly agreed with the college coordinators as to the nature of the ideal relationship. (A 6-item bibliography is included.) (JS)

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Special Journal Theme

Clarifying The Supervising Teachers Role

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

by R. C. Bradley

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An Investigative Study Dealing with the Identification of the Nature of the Cooperating Teacher-Student Teacher Relationship.

Educators agree that significant learning is facilitated in student teaching. By significant learning is meant more than an accumulation of facts. Significant learning makes a difference in the student teacher's personal and teaching behavior; the nature, number, and types of "teaching behaviors" he will exhibit in the future; and the change it brings about in his attitudes and in his personality. To the extent that coordinators and supervisors are interested in learnings which are functional, and which pervade the student teacher and his actions, they might well look to the type of professional relationship for leads and ideas that make for an ideal cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship. This study purports to identify the ideal relationship and to offer suggestions for improving the conditions of that teaching relationship.

The author sought: (1) to identify those factors characteristic of any good inter-personal relationship between the cooperating teacher and his assigned student teacher; (2) to determine if cooperating teachers agree that factors identified are in fact what should be; and (3) to find whether or not student teachers are cognizant of determinants of an ideal relationship.

The method of investigation used here utilized college coordinators of student teachers to describe the relationship which they considered *ideal.* This was done by means of a series of Q-technique ratings by a pilot group of six educators who were well versed in student teaching practices and who had reputed skills. Some of the statements that were sorted and rated came from related studies in teacher education (3, 5) ; however, a large number of statements about relationships of this nature was drawn from periodical literature, brochures, and seminar activities. The measuring instrument that resulted consisted of a series of 110 qualitative statements descriptive of cooperating teacher-student teacher relationships.

Three groups of twenty persons each responded and rated the 110 statements. The instructions were to rate the statements from the most characteristic to least characteristic of the Ideal Cooperating Teacher-Student Teacher Relationship. Statements were to be sorted under the following categorical headings: (5) Most Characteristic of an Ideal Cooperating Teacher-Student Teacher Relationship, SUPERIOR; (4) Very Characteristic, GOOD; (3) Only Somewhat Characteristic, but acceptable, AVERAGE; (2) Nearly Inapplicable, POOR; and (1) Least Characteristic, INFERIOR; All of the professors presently have significant responsibilities in the supervision of student teachers. They were selected because of their wide backgrounds and experiences dealing with the supervision of cooperating teacher-student teacher personnel. The aggregate number of years of experience as college coordinators resulted in a mean of 7.0 years experience for each coordinator. All but one coordinator had the Doctor's Degree.

The twenty classroom teachers cooperating in the second phase of the study work regularly as cooperating teachers for senior student teachers from North Texas University. All but four have their Master's Degrees and have served not less than five years as cooperating teachers. These teachers were classified as being outstanding cooperating teachers by the Director of the County Plan for Senior Student Teachers. The twenty student teachers responding in this study were selected randomly from the city and county plans for student teachers.

The actual dimensions selected for study were:

1. Verbal and/or non-verbal communication factors
2. Emotional adjustment and tension reduction factors
3. Professional status factors
4. Factors involving classroom control

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DR. BRADLEY *is Associate Professor, Department of Elementary Education and Psychology, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas.*

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5. Factors determining professional direction
6. Factors concerning the development of an act
7. Factors concerning the development of an educational philosophy.

Statements from most to least characteristic of the cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship for each of the afore-mentioned categories were distributed throughout the final study document. These ratings of each coordinator were then intercorrelated and the resulting correlation matrix was factor analyzed. The method of factoring consisted of a principal axis with communality estimates in the principal diagonal (rotated by a Varimax technique). Intercorrelations and factor loadings of each college rater were determined.

The results indicated that all coordinators correlate positively with each other. Correlations range from .61 to .93 with a median of .80. The factor analysis yielded only one general factor—92.9 per cent of the common variance is accounted for by one factor.

In analyzing the data to determine what constitutes an Ideal (Superior) Cooperating Teacher-Student Teacher Relationship, the investigator found nine items to be consistently selected by the college raters. The responses coming from cooperating teachers and student teachers were also supportive of the college raters. The top nine statements were of the following nature: Three were statements dealing with professional direction at the level of actively encouraging the student teacher in his professional affiliations with fellow educators within the immediate school environment; two internship statements had to do with guiding the teaching act; and one statement per classification was selected from the levels providing good communications interchange, encouraging the student's development of an educational philosophy during his internship, improving his classroom control, and employing skillfully the use of the private conference as an instructional and evaluative procedure.

Worthy of mention are those statements which less than 85 per cent but more than two-thirds of the twenty college coordinators selected as GOOD and Very Characteristic of an Ideal relationship:

THE COOPERATING TEACHER. . .

responds warmly to the student teacher's ideas.

is able to permit student teacher's expression of ideas much of the time.

adjusts explanations to fit correctly with the student teacher's ability and knowledge.

responds to the student teacher's ideas in an accepting manner.

is sympathetic about the student teacher's problems in teaching.

conveys through her manner a willingness to accept and work with controversial issues.

greatly encourages and reassures the student teacher.

sees the student teacher as a co-worker on a common problem.

improves her working relationship with the student teacher by taking him to professional meetings and in-service experiments.

actively encourages the pupils to respond to the student teacher as a person of authority.

sometimes leaves the classroom so that the student teacher has opportunity to teach on his own.

directs the student teacher in procedures to use in correcting errors that may be made inadvertently during class recitations.

seeks to improve the student teacher's understanding of the pupils in her classroom by frequent discussions concerning classroom management and control.

Responses to the six statements selected as LEAST characteristic of the ideal teaching relationship are of the following nature: Three professional status statements deal with the cooperating teacher's feelings of superiority and the nature and frequency of personifying those feelings. two statements deal with emotional tension; and one statement expressed a low level of understanding and communication exchange.

To summarize from the statistical and descriptive data used in this study, the nature of an ideal cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship involves one who is sincere in his efforts to supply inter- and extra- classroom experiences of a professional type for a student teacher. It is one who uses demonstrative teaching before the student teacher ever instructs the class on his own. The ideal cooperating teacher strives to improve the working relationship of the student teacher with his class. Furthermore, an ideal situation exists when the cooperating teacher "gives and takes" in the personal, private conference. During the conference setting, simultaneously student teachers will be given opportunities to discuss any actions during the teaching day and plans will be set forth for actively engaging the student teacher in developing his own functional philosophy of education on a constructive, positive basis.

Summary and Conclusions

The investigation was undertaken to ascertain (1) the nature of the ideal and less ideal cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship, (2) the extent of agreement among college coordinators as to the nature of the relationship, and (3) how opinions of cooperating teachers and student teachers compare with the professional opinions of coordinators as to what constitutes the most-least characteristics of an ideal relationship.

College coordinators were asked to rate statements descriptive of cooperating teacher-student teacher relations. The ratings were intercorrelated and the correlation matrixes obtained were factor analyzed. The following conclusions can be drawn;

1. The nature of the ideal and less ideal relationship between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher is identifiable. Strong agreement was found among all three groups as to the nature of the ideal trainee setting.

2. The most ideal cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship is one in which the cooperating teacher genuinely accepts the student teacher as a person in training to become a professional person through experiencing the activities planned for his professional and personal growth. By contrast, the least ideal situation is one in which the cooperating teacher exhibits a feeling of superiority, appears somewhat threatening and hostile, and either ignores or rejects the personal feelings of the student teacher. Teachers who exhibit these imbalances of conduct contribute little to the better welfare of the new teacher since their actions and comments often lead to ridicule, embarrassment, and belittlement.

3. As shown in this study, student teachers can describe the ideal cooperating teacher-student teacher relationship in about the same manner as college coordinators and their cooperating teachers. Therefore, if the student teacher finds himself in an ideal situation, most likely he recognizes, this fact and profits psychologically from such knowledge. By the same token, the beginning teacher who is deprived of the ideal situation is more likely to suffer not only from lack of proper guidance and instruction, but more likely will be detrimentally influenced by acquiring negative attitudes and poor habits of teaching since he finds himself in an unwarranted training position.

4. For the most part, a major portion of the student teacher's guidance and instruction comes outside of the classroom teaching act. Hence, this places a major emphasis upon the personal, private conference as a means of improving the beginning teacher's methods of instruction. Moreover, there is much need of a warm, personal friendship to exist between the teacher and his student-teacher since this relationship is more often engendered outside the classroom setting.

5. In the ideal experience for the student teacher, the cooperating teacher is experiencing an accurate, empathic understanding of the college student's periods of anxiety and satisfaction. He senses the student teacher's work, fear, and confusion as if it were his own, but without ever losing the "as if" quality. Ideally, the cooperating teacher is so familiar with the student teacher's world that he moves about in it freely, imparting information as necessary on the one hand, while on the other voicing meanings in the student teacher's experience of which the novice teacher is scarcely aware. Situations in which a student teacher is expected to succeed are more common than educational settings wherein significant ideas have been communicated successfully to the student teacher. A cooperating teacher might think a student teacher is succeeding, when in fact, the feeling is not shared by the apprentice. It is one thing for a student teacher to "think" he is doing a good job; it is quite another to "know and feel" it.

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